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A P A P E R

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BY

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The negro question of the day is the negro himself. Till the close of the war it was his freedom. For the next ten years it was his relations with the country; citizenship and rights. For generations to come it will be his deplorable condition, his deficiencies, and how to make the most of him.

I speak, of course, of the average negro of the South. In his mental, moral, and material destitution, he has as much power as anybody to make the next President, or to decide on questions of tariff, currency, or war. Hence the negro question is and will be, as it has been for the past forty years, a foremost one.

The difficulty with him is, mainly, a subjective not an objective one; himself, not his relations. His low ideas of life and duty, his weak conscience, his want of energy and thrift, his indolent, sensuous, tropical blood, are, rather than mere ignorance, the important and unfortunate facts about him. The race is not, however, a fallen, degraded one. Ecclesiastical, marital, parental and filial relations among the colored people, are, by civilized standards, terribly wrong. Pastors and deacons can sell whisky and lead loose lives without scandal; an ex-jail-bird returns to his former social position; in politics and in society character goes for little or nothing. Yet there is in our principal cities, North and South, and scattered through the country, a class of colored people of excellent tone, of preachers of character and force.

The power of Christian education and of right public sentiment has never reached the negro race; it has been made impossible. Whether these influences shall be brought to bear upon them is the question. They have never rejected what was never within their reach; their condition is a sad one, but they are not debauched.

A colored girl who comes to the Hampton Institute usually makes great improvement; her expression and general appearance change; her womanly instincts become strong; her self-respect and character develop by direct teaching and by the still more potent effect of influence and atmosphere. Yet her previous life may not have been pure. She may have sinned without being demoralized by it. Her moral sense was too weak to be shocked. She knew, but could not realize the wrong. It was no terrible leap into an abyss; it was the logic of her life; inevitable, almost, from the social conditions about her, and no ruinous fall.

Every worthy girl who graduates from our institutions—many of them strikingly intelligent and attractive—is fair game for any hound who chooses to follow her. Whatever her legal rights, she has, practically, no redress; public sentiment does not demand it; she has no avenger but God. Without good society to stimulate her to virtue, living for the most part with those who cannot afford to throw stones, with her own impulsive warm blood against her, only Almighty Grace can save her. I know a number of this class who are devoting themselves as teachers to their race, whose steadiness I wonder at.

Women are often preferred as teachers to men; they succeed equally well, and have equal wages as public school teachers.

The success of co-education among the negroes has been marked. But four cases for discipline in nearly ten years has been the record at Hampton.

While multitudes of freedmen are given over to sensuality, there are multitudes who need but the shining of God's truth upon them and the accessories of Christian living, to cause the seeds of virtue and of moral beauty in them to spring up, making their lives pure and fruitful; fruitful and useful, even if, from the power of the old nature, not always as correct as they should be.

The morals of the negro are better than they seem. We mistake in our estimate of the reaction of transgression upon ignorant offenders. The story of the devout old "Auntie," who *would* go to communion service and not let one poor old goose (that she had stolen) "come between her and her blessed Lord," shows how little a broken commandment disturbs the peace of the unenlightened.

The oft-mentioned "divorce" between religion and morals never occurred. They never were united, and could not be. We should be careful of severe conclusions as to the value of their weak, inconsistent discipleship. God has been very near to them, and has ever been ready to return to them whenever they would return to Him. They remind us, in many ways, of the children of Israel. The strong religious nature of the negro race makes it with its peculiar experience seem like one that has been led by a pillar of cloud. They appear to be better fitted for a theocracy than for a republic.

In our judgment of the Anglo-African we should take the relative, the historic standpoint, and there we find ground for hope; but to fulfill this hope we should organize our work for it from the standpoint of absolute fact, of just analysis. We should act like the doctor with his tonics or his knife, not as a tearful sympathizer who would kill with delicacies.

There was no "annihilation of the negro mind in slavery." There was not so very much to annihilate in the poor beings who were brought from the African jungle. In the providence of God the selfishness of men was instrumental, as all things are, to the fulfillment of His eternal purposes. The contact of a higher and lower race in slavery is inevitably most damaging to the latter, and in many ways helpful to the former.

Books are essential to knowledge, but not to wisdom and manly force. The *taboo* of books was the greatest stimulus the race ever had. The black man (contrary to general opinion) *could* think, and thus foiled the white man. He heard table talk, gossip, and speeches. His powers grew as he observed and pondered; restricting knowledge gave it a charm; it was the white man's source of power; with it he would be like him; to possess this secret became a passion, and this passion, though quenched in many by the reaction, and the hard realities of freedom, is the hope of the race in its sudden emancipation in its new temptations and dangers. The negro is an infant in literature, but a graduate from the school of experience. He was fitted for freedom far better than was supposed, and candid Southerners admit that the race has done better than they dared to expect. The total products of the South have been greater than ever. A neighbor of mine, a Confederate Colonel, says that he gets one-third more from free than he ever did from slave labor.

Constitutional amendments and civil rights are no guarantee of the salvation

of the freedman. They only give him standing ground on which he can work it out for himself. They give to his friends a chance to help build him up. They mean simply opportunity.

His worst master is still over him—his passions. This he does not realize. He does not see "the point" of life clearly; he lacks foresight, judgment, and hard sense. His main trouble is not ignorance, but deficiency of character; his grievances occupy him more than his deepest needs. There is no lack of those who have mental capacity. The question with him is not one of brains, but of right instincts, of morals, and of hard work. Most savage races are not mentally sluggish. The African Zulu tests the wit and resources of an educated missionary. The Polynesian cannibal is a natural orator and takes to law and theology with every readiness. The aborigines of Australia are quickwitted. With their struggle for existence, their perpetual "*qui vive*," their traditions, their stores of literature, of no mean merit, transmitted orally for ages, most savage people are not like "dumb driven cattle;" yet their life is little better than that of brutes, because the moral nature is dormant.

The *differentia* of the races seem to be in moral strength, in guiding instincts, in power to "sense" things, in their genius for this or that. Within school or college walls these distinctions hardly appear. In active life they are conspicuous and decisive.

With us, the question with the colored race is not, to what culture the gifted few can attain; we find negro blood among those in the higher ranks of success of many kinds; but what does the race, as a whole, need most and need now? How shall their weak points be made strong?

They need a system of training which aims at the formation of character, and of self-respect; these rest upon a foundation of morals and good habits. We can best aid them by Christian example and teaching. The best of teachers are required. When his whole routine of life is controlled, the negro pupil is like clay in the potter's hands. Boarding schools alone can do the thorough work required. Their officers should realize in themselves the ideas of a true Christian civilization. A teacher does more by virtue of what he is than of what he says. The most powerful constructive influence is indirect; the inner life expands in the right atmosphere rather than through direct pressure. To create such opportunities the American Missionary Association has established a series of institutions whose magnitude and cost have seemed, to some, too great, but the Association was wise to concentrate its resources for higher education, in order to secure a higher quality of personal force and stronger moulding influences, as well as the economical advantages of maintaining larger numbers at one point.

Drill, training, toning up, is the important feature in the Association's work; it is making men and women; it is, I believe, a well-balanced, thorough-going system of culture, aiming directly at the mark, mingling mental with moral and physical training; satisfied to send out graduate teachers as Christians, no matter what denominational flag they may fly.

We negro teachers have a stimulus, that the world knows little of, in the enthusiasm of our students, whose opportunities, in most cases, have cost a struggle; they call out every energy by the depth of their need, their unlimited faith in us and by their heroic perseverance. They leave us for the field; we watch

them, they never forget us, and, better, they don't forget their debts. We are not like those who fire into the air; we see our shot strike.

The natural indolence of the negro is as much in his way as his ignorance. In salvation by hard work is his hope, his *in hoc vinces*. His education must be promotive of industrial habits. Educated men without trades form a large, and the worst proportion of criminals. Common schools are not the panacea that some have claimed them to be. But they give us a leverage upon this people, and we should make the most of them by supplying them with the best of teachers; with men whose knowledge has cost them something, who are able to win their bread, as the people must, and can tell them how to do it; who shall be, not only pedagogues but guides, and civilizers, whose power shall be that of character and example, not of sounding words. The negro teacher is the hope of his race; he is looked up to; his influence for good or evil is vast; when well-fitted for his work he has not been found wanting.

What the colored race needs most, and needs now, is teachers of the right sort, as well as preachers fitted for the pulpit by some stern discipline. Let us make the teachers and we will make the people. Here Christian benevolence at the North finds its true point of effort. Upon it the American Missionary Association has directed its forces with a wisdom and energy which, if sustained, promises the greatest results.

Teachers are in demand. Of the multitudes of free schools in the South probably not one in ten is properly taught. Southern taxation for colored schools amounts to not far from \$800,000.00 and Southerners are sending to us for teachers. Institutions conducted by Northern men for negroes have generally secured the respect and good-will of all; their graduates are called for on all sides.

There is no place in the world where such a harvest awaits Christian labor and outlay as in work for the freedmen of America. Every dollar, and every hour expended reach those passionately eager to get good and to do their part toward it. The English language with its riches has become their inheritance. There is no foreign jargon to be learned. They accept the Bible, they crowd their churches. There is infinite work to be done but they are open to the truth.

Long and well-sustained effort will bring about a better state of things among them. But there are comparatively few who will do their part to this end.

A hundred will be horrified over the Hamburg massacre where one will give a dollar to better their condition; thousands will cry out for Federal bayonets where but here and there one will help furnish them with the defense of enlightened minds. An intelligent colored man of good character can take better care of himself without than with a company of soldiers at his back.

Two things are noticeable: an outcry over the abandonment of the negro to the tender mercies of his former owner, and a steady shrinkage in the contributions for his improvement. Embodying as does this cause the grand moral objective of the war and excusing, aye, demanding, every drop of blood that was spilt, it is pitiful to see the meagre contributions both of money and of personal force that have been made for it. You can count on the fingers of your hands the first-rate men who are devoted to it. As the army is the general, so the institution is the man; there are not men enough. Their cry is not to fire the Northern heart: denunciation is, to them, as sounding brass. They are working under the banner of the Prince of Peace, and they find many a

noble friend among those who lately were fighting to keep the negro down; they call for resources, for schoolhouses, books, and personally, for enough to keep them comfortably.

When it was a question of freedom or slavery, when North and South were sharing, directly or indirectly, the profits of slave labor, and moneyed interests were too strong for humanity, it was necessary to denounce the wrong.

To the Abolitionist the African slave was a being made in the image of God, bound in chains, and bought and sold like cattle; the negro was idealized; race differentia were ignored; shining characters and their opposites were painted on the background of human bondage; Uncle Tom showing the possible nobility of the negro under the wrongs of slavery, and Legree illustrating the possible ruin of the white man wrought by it.

To arouse the country, blinded by the love of money and of ease, this was necessary. But North and South have atoned for their guilty partnership; the language of those days is not the language for to-day. To denounce the South as a whole befits only a demagogue.

In the South, during the past ten years, ideas have changed as in no equal period in the history of our race; the revolution has not been all external.

Of the 4,000 free schools in Virginia, 1,100 are for blacks, employing more than 600 colored teachers, the rest being white. They cost annually in taxes about \$350,000, fourfifths of which comes from the pockets of the whites, who thus voluntarily supply more money to the cause of negro education than the entire annual revenue of the American Missionary Association.

It means progress, that Georgia has for years given to the colored University at Atlanta \$8,000, and that Virginia has given the Hampton Institute \$10,000 annually, officered and controlled as they both are by Northern teachers, and filled with students all of whom vote in opposition to the party that aids their education; that the latter State had in full operation a free school system five years before her new Constitution required it; that the Presbytery of Virginia and other Southern religious bodies, in their actions and in their organs, are recognizing the genuine needs of the freedmen, urging effort in their behalf, and are making friendly overtures to workers from the North. In old times thousands of good men and women in the South taught their slaves the Way of Life, and many are doing it now. General Stonewall Jackson taught a colored Sunday-school twenty years, and Colonel Preston continues the good work. There is yet stout opposition, and there are mountains of prejudice; to be taxed for negro education is not yet counted a luxury. The sluggish, thinly populated back country has changed but little; and entire regions not at all. In the cities, with their quicker life, more active thought, and commerce with the world, they have better discerned the signs of the times. In Virginia to-day no politician dare oppose free schools in his canvass for the popular vote. The Southern leaders in educational ideas are among the best men in the land; they have struggled in a way not dreamed of at the North; while in a minority they have the earnestness in a just cause that insures success.

The work of educating the freedmen is being done mainly by colored teachers. They are sustained first, by ex-rebel soldiers and ex-slaveholders. Of the hundreds of applications for teachers that I have received in the past seven years, nineteen out of twenty have come from that class with offers of salaries in all cases;

secondly, by friends in the North who, eight years before the South expended a dollar, with great effort and outlay, and with aid from the Freedmen's Bureau, were laying a foundation for future builders, giving to the colored people a grand impulse which has brought the present State systems into the line of demand and into the logic of events. They are now concentrating their efforts on higher institutions, which without their aid would never have existed, and which depend on them for their building up, and largely for their maintenance, and entirely for their endowment. They are centres of educational inspiration and power, working harmoniously with the local systems, winning every year the increased confidence and respect of all classes, sending out annually graduates who are needed by thousands and are welcomed along the whole line of school effort.

Bourbonism at the South is not dead; it will not fail for want of effort to restore the Black Laws in South Carolina and elsewhere, nullify school systems, and thrust the black man back to his "normal condition." The theory that "a black man's inner consciousness is only to be reached through his hide" is not fully discarded. Its success, which I think impossible, except in South Carolina and in some of the Gulf States, would not be a reduction of the freedman to peaceful serfdom. To thus mount guard over the negro would be costly. He has been wonderfully quickened and modified since freedom, more by experience than by school teaching; his latent ferocity would inspire a war without a battle in which the rifle and the firebrand would each do their worst work, and desolation would reign. The races will stand or fall together.

Men's madness must sometimes be shown. Perhaps we shall see illustrated at the South the opposite extremes of wisdom and folly in dealing with the negro question; more generally a mixture of both.

General Toombs' silly rant about the "500,000 savages" in Georgia, did not prevent a generous Constitutional provision or permission for State aid to higher negro education.

Dr. Sears, agent of the Peabody Fund, says that in all the State where there has been a reaction against education, it has been followed by a return to better measures than ever. A general forward movement at the South is assured; through action and reaction it will go on slowly, surely, and grandly.

The Rev. Mark Hopkins, D. D., late President of Williams College, Massachusetts, recently said, "History presents no social problem more difficult than that which now confronts the people of the Southern States." After stating the leading facts of the problem, Dr. Hopkins continues. "Is it possible that from these an harmonious social and political state should come? If it is possible it must be by a combination of intellectual and moral forces such as the world has neverseen."

Should the general government do its duty by the "nation's wards," and good men of all sections sinking their partizanship, make, in God's name, common cause in behalf of the negro race, the end will be reached.

